

Self-Study Guide for New Employees

Ethical Principles at the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics, PAS

Introduction

Welcome to the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IBB PAS).

The Institute's scientific and organizational activities are based on the principles of integrity, honesty, responsibility, mutual respect, and compliance with applicable laws and internal regulations.

The purpose of this self-study guide is to familiarize new employees with the fundamental ethical principles applicable at IBB PAS and to indicate the available channels for seeking advice or reporting concerns when ethical questions or problems arise.

After completing this guide, employees should:

- understand the fundamental principles of research integrity;
- understand the principles governing authorship of scientific publications;
- know how to manage research data properly;
- recognize potential conflicts of interest;
- understand the principles for the responsible use of artificial intelligence tools;
- know where to report ethical concerns or suspected violations.

1. Fundamental Values

All employees of IBB PAS are expected to adhere to the following principles:

- honesty in conducting research and presenting results;
- scientific and professional integrity;
- objectivity and impartiality;
- responsibility for the quality of their work;
- transparency of research methods;
- respect for colleagues, doctoral researchers, students, and research partners;
- responsible stewardship of the Institute's resources;
- compliance with applicable laws and internal regulations.

Every employee is responsible for their own conduct and should contribute to creating a safe, respectful, and supportive working environment.

2. Research Integrity

Research integrity is the foundation of scientific activity.

Any form of research misconduct is unacceptable, including in particular:

- fabrication of research results;
- falsification of data;
- manipulation of results to obtain a desired outcome;
- selective omission or concealment of data without scientific justification;
- plagiarism;
- self-plagiarism;
- misappropriation of another person's results or ideas.

Example

A researcher obtains results that do not support the original hypothesis. Such results must not be excluded simply because they fail to confirm the expected outcome. Any decision to exclude data must be scientifically justified, properly documented, and verifiable.

If there are any concerns regarding research integrity, employees should consult the Research Ethics Committee.

3. Authorship of Publications

Authorship of a scientific publication carries responsibility for its content.

Only individuals who have made a substantial contribution in at least one of the following areas may be listed as authors:

- development of the research concept;
- acquisition or analysis of data;
- interpretation of results;

- drafting or substantial revision of the manuscript.

All authors should approve the final version of the publication.

The following practices are considered unethical:

- listing individuals who did not contribute to the work ("guest authorship");
- omitting individuals who made a substantial contribution;
- requiring co-authorship solely because of one's position;
- claiming another person's results as one's own.

Any disputes concerning authorship should be resolved as early as possible, preferably during the research planning stage.

4. Research Data Management

Researchers are responsible for the proper management of research data.

They should:

- store research data securely;
- document the research process;
- ensure that research results can be reproduced;
- comply with personal data protection and confidentiality requirements;
- follow the Institute's data archiving procedures.

Any modifications to research data should be traceable and appropriately documented.

Data storage practices should enable subsequent verification by authorized persons.

5. Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools may support scientific, educational, and organizational activities; however, they do not replace human responsibility.

Employees using AI tools should:

- critically evaluate and verify AI-generated content;
- clearly disclose the use of AI in research and publications, while complying with the requirements of publishers, funding agencies, and applicable regulations;
- never submit confidential information, personal data, or other protected information to external AI systems without appropriate authorization and safeguards;
- remember that full responsibility for the content of publications, reports, and other documents always rests with the author.

AI tools must not be listed as authors of scientific publications.

6. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when personal, financial, or professional interests may influence—or appear to influence—an employee's impartiality and objectivity.

Examples include:

- participating in the evaluation of a close collaborator's project;
- making decisions concerning entities with which the employee has financial ties;
- engaging in outside activities that could compromise research independence.

Where an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest arises, employees should:

- disclose the conflict to their supervisor or the appropriate authority;
- withdraw from the relevant activity; if withdrawal is not possible, disclose the conflict to all parties concerned.

Transparency regarding conflicts of interest protects both the credibility of research and public trust in the Institute.

7. Respect and Workplace Culture

IBB PAS strives to provide a working environment based on mutual respect, cooperation, and respect for the dignity of every member of the Institute's community.

The following behaviours are not tolerated:

- workplace bullying (mobbing);
- discrimination;
- harassment;
- unequal treatment;

- abuse of authority;
- psychological or verbal abuse;
- intimidation, humiliation, or social exclusion of colleagues;
- any other behaviour that violates the dignity, rights, or well-being of members of the Institute community.

Every member of the Institute community should be treated with respect, regardless of their position, academic degree, age, sex, origin, beliefs, or any other legally protected characteristic.

8. Where to Seek Assistance

If employees have concerns regarding ethical principles, workplace relationships, or suspected violations of applicable standards, they may contact the appropriate Institute body.

Academic Ombudsperson

The Academic Ombudsperson can be contacted regarding:

- interpersonal conflicts;
- organizational issues affecting the workplace atmosphere;
- situations requiring mediation;
- other informal issues concerning the functioning of the Institute community.

The Academic Ombudsperson provides advice, conducts mediation, and helps determine the appropriate course of action.

Committee for the Prevention of Bullying and Discrimination

This Committee handles reports concerning:

- workplace bullying;
- discrimination;
- harassment;
- unequal treatment;
- other inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

Research Ethics Committee

The Research Ethics Committee should be contacted regarding:

- research integrity;
- plagiarism and self-plagiarism;
- authorship of scientific publications;
- manipulation of research data;
- conflicts of interest related to research activities;
- other violations of research ethics.

Disciplinary Ombudspersons

Suspected disciplinary offences may be referred to:

- the Disciplinary Ombudsperson for researchers and research support staff;
- the Disciplinary Ombudsperson for Doctoral Researchers.

If an employee is unsure which body is appropriate, they should first contact the Academic Ombudsperson.

The detailed responsibilities and procedures of these bodies are governed by applicable laws and the internal regulations of IBB PAS.

Short Knowledge Check

1. May research results be removed solely because they do not support the hypothesis?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Should the head of a research group automatically be a co-author of every publication?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Does the use of AI tools relieve the author of responsibility for the content of a publication?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Which body should receive reports of suspected plagiarism?

☐ Academic Ombudsperson ☐ Research Ethics Committee ☐ Disciplinary Committee

5. Who should you contact if you are unsure which reporting procedure is appropriate?

☐ Only the Director ☐ The Academic Ombudsperson ☐ Only the Research Ethics Committee

Correct Answers

1. No
2. No
3. No
4. Research Ethics Committee
5. The Academic Ombudsperson